

GLE project moving ahead

Posted: Saturday, March 01, 2014 12:22 AM

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A major project proposed for land adjacent to the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant continues to progress, offering hope for job creation and economic stability in the area.

Gov. Steve Beshear and U.S. Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz met last weekend to discuss GE Hitachi's plans to apply for a license to construct the Global Laser Enrichment project, or GLE, on land adjacent to the gaseous diffusion plant. The GLE has advised the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) that it will apply for the license by this fall, Beshear said in a statement Friday.

Chad Chancellor, president of Paducah Economic Development, said this is welcome news for the area.

"Our number one issue for ... 20 years has been what's going to happen when the gaseous diffusion plant closes. To have a new technology that can last for many, many years is just something we should all be excited about," he said.

Chancellor said that the number of jobs created by the construction and operation of the GLE plant will number in the hundreds. He believes the skills of former workers at the gaseous diffusion plant - who numbered around 1,100, according to Sun files - will transfer well to the GE-Hitachi's proposed laser enrichment facility.

Talks of GE-Hitachi's proposal are progressing alongside plans for cleanup of the plant site, which is owned by the U.S. Department of Energy. Gov. Beshear said that allowing GLE construction to begin on the site adjacent to the gaseous diffusion plant means both construction and cleanup can take place at the same time, resulting in hundreds of long-term jobs in the area.

"Additionally, once the PGDP site has been fully decommissioned and cleaned, it will become a prime location for other facilities like GLE," Beshear added.

According to a Jan. 20 letter of intent from GLE to the NRC, approval for construction of the new plant is requested by November 2016.